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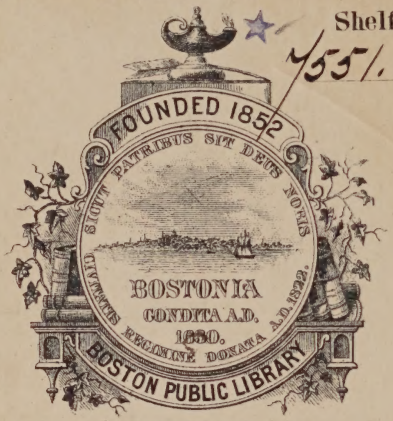

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Dec. 13, 1893.

William R. Stearns

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. THOMAS SKELTON,

TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE CHURCH IN FOXBOROUGH.

NOVEMBER 2, 1808.

BY SAMUEL STEARNS, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.

CHARLESTOWN,

PRINTED BY JONATHAN HOWE.

1809.

N. E. Methodist Hist. Soc.

Dec 13. 1893.

AN

ORDINATION SERMON.

2 Cor. v. 20.—*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Among the various professions of men, no one, perhaps, is equally solemn and momentous, with that of a gospel minister. Not confined to the perishable interests of this world, the ministerial office extends, in its connections and influence, into the world of spirits; and has special reference to things which are unseen and eternal. To the minsiters of Christ are committed in a very peculiar sense, the souls of their fellow men, with a solemn charge from their Lord and Master, to watch for them as those who must give account. As ambassadors for him, they are to beseech rebellious men in his stead, to be reconciled to God; and to spare no efforts to attach them to their Master's cause. Their mission is of divine origin, and its object most glorious and important, as we learn from the text in connection with some verses immediately preceding; where the apostle is treating of the glorious design of grace in reconciling sinners to God. The ground, or medium, through which this wonderful work is effected, is the *Lord Jesus Christ;* the mean of its accomplishment is the *word* of God; the instruments are the *ministers* of Christ; and the whole is resolved into the rich grace and love of God. The

text is then introduced, by way of inference from the foregoing observations. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Viewing these words, not as confined to the apostles, but equally applicable to their successors in office in every subsequent age of the church, it will be the object of this discourse, to delineate the requisite qualifications of an ambassador of Christ; the design of his embassage; and the manner in which he is to execute it.

Let us then, in the *first* place, attempt to delineate the requisite qualifications of an ambassador of Christ.

And here let me premise, that there is no term, perhaps, within the compass of our language, more significant of the ministerial character and office than this.

An ambassador is the servant of some king, prince, or ruler of the people, from whom he receives his commission, and the instructions by which he is to be governed in his official conduct. So the ministers of Christ derive their authority from him, and are to act in strict conformity to the instructions of his kingdom, and laws of his government. As the ambassador must be accountable to his master for the manner in which he discharges the duties of his office, so ministers are to watch for souls as those who must give account. The term ambassador, then, is highly significant of the ministerial office, and well suited to designate those who are to manage, under Christ, their Lord and Master, the great concerns of his gospel kingdom.

In attempting to delineate the requisite qualifications for this sacred office, our attention is naturally

turned to those which respect both the *mind* and *heart.*

Among those of the mind, we may notice good *natural* and *acquired* abilities. A sound mind, cultivated and improved by a liberal* education, ought ever to be considered an indispensable requisite for the Christian ministry. "Not a novice," said an inspired apostle, when describing the necessary qualifications of a gospel bishop or minister, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Whatever is pretended by the itinerants of the day, we cannot suppose those qualified for public teachers, who are strangers, not only to the sciences in general, but scarcely able correctly to read the sacred scriptures in their own language. While such untaught, pretended guides, are countenanced as teachers of religion, what else can be expected but that both they and their deluded followers stumble for want of light, and perish in their delusion.

The human mind, though naturally capable of knowledge, without cultivation is a mere chaos. Knowlede and wisdom are not usually attained without close and persevering attention. The seed must be sown by early instruction, and the rising plant cultivated and matured by after application. That divine knowledge, which is necessary for the guides of souls, is not, under the present dispensation, attained by immediate communication from the Spirit of God. To expect it in this way is a mere enthusiastic delusion. It must be sought and

* The word "*liberal,*" is not here used in that restrictive sense, which would necessarily suppose a college education; but as intending some general acquaintance with the sciences. If such knowledge be possessed, it is deemed of very little consequence where it was obtained, whether at an university, academy, or in some more private way.

expected only in a way of close and persevering study.

The study of sacred theology has the *first* and *highest* claim to the attention of a religious teacher. Other studies, however, are not to be looked upon as wholly foreign to this grand design. A competent knowledge of the arts and sciences is of high importance. It enlarges and elevates the mind, and renders it more capable of judging of things, and of distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

They, who are well versed in the original languages of the sacred writings, are under peculiar advantages for acquiring a correct knowledge of the doctrines and precepts they contain. Many profitable discoveries may be made, and engaging beauties seen, in those sacred fountains, which are almost necessarily lost in a translation ; though the substance of the original is, in general, well preserved in *ours*.

As the sacred scriptures are to be the grand theme of gospel preaching, so the ministers of Christ should make them the principal subject of their attention. Close and persevering application is necessary for obtaining that acquaintance with the Christian scheme with which every ambassador of Christ should be furnished ; and without which, no one can faithfully and honourably acquit himself in performing the duties of his station. Whatever proficiency in the study of divinity is made preparatory to entering on the work of the ministry, the duty of application does not then cease. Timothy, though well furnished for entering the sacred office before he engaged in its arduous duties, " having from a child known the holy scriptures," must still give attendance to reading and meditation, that his profiting may appear to all men. Divinity is a sci-

ence, of which no one is perfect master in the present state: the word of God, a treasure never exhausted. And a faithful ambassador will not content himself with drawing from the stock of religious knowledge already acquired, but will still devote himself to study, in the prayerful search of the sacred writings, that he may grow in the knowledge of Christ, and like a scribe, well instructed unto the kingdom of God, bring out of his treasure things new as well as old, for the instruction and benefit of his hearers.

To a persevering application to the study of sacred *truth* must be added, serious and engaged *meditation;* that what is read may be well digested, reduced to proper form, and ready for future use. And the whole must be accompanied with fervent prayer to the Father of lights, that he would graciously illuminate the mind, preserve us from error, and guide us by his Holy Spirit into all truth.

Those who are to instruct and lead others in the way of life, of *all men*, had need be men of prayer. The numerous difficulties which attend a right discharge of the duties of their office, the blindness of their own minds, the imperfection of their hearts, and the danger of leading their hearers astray, all solemnly demand it. And if they have a proper sense of the vast importance of their office, and a right discharge of it, that God may be glorified, and the salvation of men secured, they cannot but be such.

To the above qualifications of an ambassador of Christ, I would add, as of high and indispensable importance, a *good heart*. Without this, it is easy to see, the best natural and acquired abilities, by taking a wrong direction, may injure, rather than benefit the cause, in which they are employed. Right dispositions of heart are an indispensable

requisite in the character of an ambassador of Christ. These are, at once, the best guard against corrupting the word of God, and the surest pledge of ministerial fidelity. Without them, no man, however learned, and otherwise great, is qualified to plead the Redeemer's cause, and transact the affairs of his gospel kingdom. In order to this, he must have felt the power of religion on his *own heart*. He will then be able to describe and recommend it to others ; and acting under its influence, will spare no efforts in persuading them to embrace it.

Undoubtedly the man of *grace*, other qualifications being equal, is far the most likely to reach the great ends of the ministry, in reconciling sinners to God. For beside the advantage of special illumination from the Spirit of grace, he is better fortified against the temptations and discouragements which attend his work, and will be under the influence of a constant stimulus within himself to diligence and exertion. The love of Christ and precious souls will constrain him cordially to seek his glory, and their salvation. Animated by these, he will feel a willingness and desire to *spend* and be *spent* in the delightful, though arduous work. And not only will he labor by instruction, reproof, and counsel, to bring his people to the knowledge and reception of the truth, but will enforce these by the cogent eloquence of a regular and vituous life.

The force of example, it is well known, is often commanding, and its attractions sometimes almost irresistible. Generally speaking, it is far more influential than bare precept. If therefore, it be at varience with the doctrines which are taught, it will not only force conviction of the insincerity of the teacher, but greatly retard, if not wholly destroy, the efficacy of his teaching. Many will follow it.

Sinners will be hardened and perish in their sins; and, awful to think! their blood will be required at the watchman's hands. A bare *lightness* of deportment is wholly unbecoming the sacred order. But a *vicious* minister of Jesus Christ, what a *horrid sound!* By every judicious mind, such an one must be viewed, as a very *monster;* and shocking indeed is the figure he makes, among those of his holy profession. But the example of a pious ambassador will, in the main, accord with his public teaching; and give a cogency to his counsels and instructions, which nothing else, that is human, can impart. Aware of this, Saint Paul commands Timothy to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and purity." Again, he exhorts him, to "take heed to himself as well as to his doctrine, and continue in them; for in doing this, he should both save himself and them that heard him."

The necessity of the above qualifications to fit a person for the gospel ministry, the word of God expressly declares. Without them, no man has a call from heaven to engage in this sacred work; and if he thrust himself into it without a call, he is chargable with a rash invasion of the priestly office, and does it at his peril.

Having thus attempted to describe the qualifications requisite for an ambassador of Christ, we are in the

Second place, to consider the *design* of his embassy.

This is explicitly stated to us in the text; it is the *reconciliation of sinners to God.* We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye *reconciled* to *God.* The same is declared to be its object in a preceding verse; where it is called, the ministry of reconciliation.

From the sacred scriptures we learn, that the human race has undergone, in a moral view, a great and awful change, since the creation of the first human pair. "Lo, this only have I found," saith the royal preacher, "that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." By the apostasy of our first parents, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all, for that all have sinned." Mankind are no longer, in their *natural* state, in a condition of holiness; but entirely the reverse. The image of their Creator is lost, and the whole race is involved in a state of moral ruin. Alienated in their affections from the pure and holy character, and service of their righteous sovereign, their state is *now* a state of revolt and rebellion. To convince them of their folly and misery, reconcile them to their offended God, and so recover them from this deplorable condition, is an important design of the glorious scheme of gospel grace, revealed and published to us in the sacred oracles. The ground and medium of this reconciliation is the blessed Son of God, who, by his sufferings and death, hath made atonement for sin, and opened a door of hope to the rebellious children of men. In consequence of what he has done, God now declares himself willing to pardon and receive to favor, the returning *penitent*, through faith in the Redeemer's blood. Thus, the Father is *reconcilable*, on these terms, to his offending creatures, through the atonement and mediation of his Son.

The reconciling of sinners to God, is also, the work of Christ, and effected only by the powerful influences of his Spirit. Christ uses instruments, however, in accomplishing this work, and for this end has appointed the gospel ministry. Ministers

are, therefore, his ambassadors. From him they receive their commission and instructions. By these they are to be governed in all cases, and may, in no instance depart from them without incurring his righteous displeasure. Their business is, as instruments in their Master's hands, to reconcile sinners to God. For this end they are to lay open to their view their misery and danger; state to them the terms of reconciliation, and urge their immediate compliance, by those motives, which the gospel exhibits. Their first and principal concern is, to bring sinners to consideration, repentance, and submission. They are then to guard them against error, warn them of the evils of indolence and inconstancy, and animate them, by every suitable motive, to a growing attachment to their Master's interest, and zeal in his service. The glory of God in the accomplishment of this great event, is to be the supreme object of his ambassadors, in all the transactions of their sacred trust. For this end, they are to *preach*, and *pray*, and *spend*, and be *spent*.

It remains that we consider in the

Third and last place, the *manner* in which the ambassadors of Christ are to execute the duties of their sacred embassage.

Our text furnishes us with an example. We *pray* you, be ye reconciled to God. Persuasion, then, is the mode in which Christ's ministers are to seek the reconciliation of sinners. But in order to pursuade successfully, other things will be necessary as connected with and preparatory to this. The mind must be enlightened, the conscience awakened, and the understanding convinced. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Sinners must see their sin and danger, before they will

effectually embrace and apply the remedy. To this end they are to be taught their deplorable condition by nature, as deeply ingulphed by the common apostasy, in sin and ruin; and deeper *still*, by their personal transgressions. They are to be taught the extreme evil of sin, its contrariety to the Divine character, law, and government; how odious it is in the sight of God; how debasing to the rational nature; and how awful must be its eternal consequences, if unrepented of and unpardoned. The infinite purity also, and inflexible justice of God; the holy nature and expansive breath of his law, as extending to every moral action and volition; its irresistible strength and inexorable rigor to destroy the transgressor; the impossibility of justification by the deeds of the law, and of salvation on that original plan of the law covenant, are to be clearly depicted and set before them. The way will then be prepared to bring into view the eternal design of infinite love and grace, to recover and save myriads of the lost race of Adam, with the astonishing display of *Jehovah's* unsearchable wisdom to accomplish this, in a way consistant with, and advancive of the glory of all the Divine attributes. And here, the Lord Jesus Christ is to be set before sinners, as the *wisdom* of God, and the *power* of God; and the unrivalled glories of his person unveiled and exhibited to their view. His suitableness also, and all sufficiency as Mediator between God and man; his authority from the Father, and interest with him; the infinite merit of his blood, and sufficiency of his atonement, are to be clearly displayed and urged upon the humble penitent, as ample ground of hope. Ministers are to preach the Lord Jesus Christ, not as an exalted and glorious *creature*, but as a glorious GOD, without beginning or end of days, eternal in

his existence, and infinite in every divine and adorable perfection. This Jesus, and not a *created* Redeemer, formed after the model of their own fancy, they are to exhibit, as the end of the law for righteousness, to every one who believeth and set before them as clearly as possible the new covenant scheme, with its gracious nature and terms. They are to teach the impotency of nature, and the efficacy of grace; and to insist earnestly on the indispensable necessity of regeneration and faith. In a word, the ambassadors of Christ are to lay the doctrine of grace, in the *strictest sense* of the *phrase*, in the foundation of the sinner's hope. But, then, they are not to be always employed about the foundation. They must carry through the doctrines of grace to their proper end, by erecting on this basis the glorious superstructure of practical holiness; in their tendency to promote which, lies their choicest glory.

The Christian scheme is not merely *doctrinal*, but also *practical*. Its grand design and tendency are to excite and cherish right affections in the hearts of men towards their proper objects, and to regulate their outward conduct. Accordingly Christ's ambassadors are to "affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God, must be careful to maintain good works." The natural fruit of faith is obedience; and that faith, which is connected with salvation, will produce, in the hearts of believers, a conscientious regard to all the commands and institutions of Heaven.

Thus ministers are to teach and unfold to their hearers, the great essential doctrines of the gospel, with their design and tendency to rectify the hearts and regulate the lives of those, who cordially embrace them.

The way is then prepared, more explicitly to state to sinners the terms of reconciliation, and urge their immediate compliance, by such arguments and motives as are contained in, or plainly deducible from the oricles of God.

Arguments to this end may be drawn from the invitations, the counsels, promises, and warnings of the sacred writings; from the reasonableness of the thing; the nature and consequences of sin and holiness; the high importance of the latter to the glory of God, and its indispensable necessity, as a qualification for the kingdom of glory; from the wrath of God, which awaits his enemies, and the unutterable sweetness of his love; the shortness and uncertainty of human life, the solemnity of death, and especially from the day of judgment and state of future retribution, when God will reward virtue and punish vice.

Christ's ambassadors are to persuade sinners not only by the soft notes of the gospel, but also by the more alarming denunciations of the divine law. For this, they have the most explicit scripture warrant, and particularly the example of an inspired apostle, who persuaded men, by the terrors of the Lord. Though the former method be more grateful to the feelings of unsanctified men, yet a sense of duty will often urge to the latter. The conscience must first be awakened and the sinner made to realize his guilt and danger before he will comply with the terms of reconciliation, and cast himself unreservedly upon the mercy of God. And to effect this, it may be indispensably necessary to uncover and present to his view the fiery indignation of the Lord; that *lake* which burns forever.

In our attempts to perform the duties of reconciling sinners to God, great *plainness*, *prudence* and *zeal* are highly important.

The style of address, though not *low* and *distasteful*, should be plain and easy to be understood by persons, even of the lowest capacity; for how shall they be instructed and edified by our preaching, when they know not "what we say, nor whereof we affirm?" When this is the case, it is easy to see, the great end of preaching must be lost. Sinners will be hardened under the word, rather than awakened, and converted; and the children of God grieved and disheartened, instead of being quickened and comforted.

That mode of preaching, which considers and addresses mankind in the gross, as being *nearly*, and with some *shades* of difference at *most*, of the same moral character, however sanctioned by the practice of some preachers of erudition and talents, we dare not commend. The word of God most evidently considers and ranks mankind under the two very different characters, of *friends* and *enemies*; and addresses them accordingly in very different language. While it approves and consoles the former, it condemns and thunders everlasting ruin in the ears of the latter. Does not fidelity, then, require the same of Christ's ambassadors? Is it not important, both in their public and private addresses, that they carefully observe the distinction, which the gospel has made, between good and bad, saints and sinners, and address them accordingly?

Great plainness is also of high importance in explaining to our hearers the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. Though most persons, it is to be hoped, have some general knowledge of what is meant by human *depravity*, *regeneration*, *repentance*, *faith*, *justification*, *adoption*, *sanctification*, and other doctrinal terms of a similar nature, yet there is reason to fear, the ideas of many concern-

ing these things, are very indistinct and incorrect. How desirable is it then, that they be often explained, and set before them in a manner, suited to their understandings? And how essentially deficient is that *mode* of preaching, which does little more, at best, than play *about* these deeply interesting doctrines, and consequently leaves the hearers as ignorant of their nature, tendency, and importance, as if they had never been noticed? Must not such ambassadors of the Lord Jesus be found awfully deficient in the solemn day of reckoning? Can they be said to have declared the whole counsel of God, and faithfully adhered to the instructions of their sacred embassage?

That great *prudence* should be exercised in performing this and every other branch of ministerial duty, we readily admit. Through want of this, we are not insensible, the Redeemer's cause may, in some instances, have greatly suffered. The usefulness of a minister very much, under God, depends upon a judicious timing and management, both of his public and private addresses to his people. For want of these, the cause of religion may suffer incalculable injury, and the minds of men be prejudiced against and alienated from the love of the truth, rather than attracted and persuaded to embrace it. If we would obtain the great end of our ministry, in reconciling sinners to God, we must study to conciliate their affections, by complying with their prejudices, customs, and habits, as far as is consistent with a good conscience. In this way, with the apostle Paul, we are to become "all things to all men, that we may by all means save some." Under this pretence, however, the faithful ambassador will be far from countenancing iniquity in any, or with holding any part of *that message*,

his Master hath commanded him to declare. Aware of the danger which awaits him in this respect, with a praying heart, he will exercise the strictest caution, lest, instead of pleasing men for their good to edification, he become, in a sinful sense, a *man pleaser*.

In every branch of duty, the faithful minister will have an eye to his Master's glory and the salvation of his people. To the exercise of Christian prudence, therefore, he will add a fervent and well directed *zeal*. A cold indifference in performing the duties of his sacred office, is absolutely *unpardonable* and forever to be *abhored*, in an ambassador of Christ. If he has felt the power of religion on his own heart, he cannot thus trifle with the Redeemer's interest, nor the souls of his fellow men. On the contrary he will feel himself sweetly impelled to exertion in a cause, so sacred and important. The wretched state and impending ruin of thoughtless sinners will touch the tenderest sensibilities of his soul, and rouse to action every power of persuasion and entreaty. With an earnestness peculiar to one, who knows the worth of immortal souls, and is acting under the influence of holy love, he will pray them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. Nor will he be soon discouraged, although his labors be unattended with that success, he could wish. No, but if he "has toiled all the night and taken nothing, nevertheless, at his Master's command, he will again let down the *net*." Again, he will state to sinners the terms of reconciliation, and with increasing earnestness urge their compliance, by such arguments and motives as the gospel suggests. And though difficulties and dangers assail him, and oppose the execution of his work, trusting in *God*, with an inspired apostle, he may

say, "*None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" Heaven will approve and applaud his faithful, though imperfect labors; and, "*though Israel be not gathered, yet shall he be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and his God shall be his strength.*"

Having thus taken a cursory view of the requisite qualifications of an ambassador of Christ; the design of his embassage; and manner in which he is to execute it; some addresses, common to the occasion, will close this discourse.

The subject we have been considering, as well as the occasion, is replete with the most salutary counsel, and might fitly be applied, in a way of solemn address, to you, my respected fathers and brethen, in the ministry. But the youth of the speaker, may be deemed a sufficient apology for waving this, and passing immediately to the pastor elect of this beloved flock and people of God, by whose request, he stands in this sacred place, and to whom he can address himself with greater freedom.

My dear Sir,

In the preceding discourse, you have had a faint description of the requisite qualifications of an ambassador of Christ; and that it generally accords with your own sentiments, we, who are acquainted with you, have no reason to doubt. Charitably believing that you possess these qualifications, in some degree of eminence, at least, and that you are called of God to the ministry of reconciliation, we have seen it our duty to proceed to the sacred rite of ordination. You are soon, my brother, to be set apart and solemnly consecrated to the work of the golpel ministry. You are to be vested with the

high honor of an ambassador of Christ; and henceforth to be employed in the everlasting concerns of his gospel kingdom. Among the people of this place more especially, is to be the field of your future labors. The object of your embassage is their reconciliation to God; and is therefore, perhaps, the most important, that ever claimed or occupied the talents of mortals, in this our apostate world. By virtue of authority derived from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is head over all things to his church, you are to proclaim in the ears of rebellious men, that atonement has been made for sin, and that their offended Sovereign is now reconcilable to them on condition of their deep repentance, and that faith in the Saviour, his grace has provided, which leads to the cordial practice of duty, and secures future obedience. These terms you are clearly and often to state to them, and urge their immediate compliance, by all those arguments and motives, adapted to this end, which are to be found in the book of God. If they hear and obey, they are *made* forever. If they reject the counsel of God against themselves, live on in sin, and die impenitent, they are *lost* past all recovery. If you be faithful in warning them of their sin and danger, and yet they remain hardened and perish, their blood will be on their own heads. But if they be lost through your neglect, their blood will God require at your hands. How solemn and awful the thought! You are, then, *dear sir*, to watch for souls, as one who must give account.

With this consideration in constant view, you will, I trust, let no worldly concerns divert your attention from the great object of your embassage. I am confident, my brother, you do not calculate upon a life of ease and sensual pleasure. The office

you are about to sustain is arduous, and calls to labor. On the manner in which you execute it, great things are depending. Interesting as eternity will be the consequences, both to yourself, and to your people. To the great end of reconciling sinners to God, and of building up the saints in holiness and comfort to eternal life, every other consideration must be made subservient. To effect this, you will *study*, and *preach*, and *pray*.

In stating to your people the terms of salvation, you will readily see, that plainness and precision are of vast importance. *Here* lies the foundation of all your labors. A defect *here*, will tarnish the beauty of the superstructure, and endanger the whole building. If the foundation be not well laid, your labor will be lost, and worse than lost.

In your preparations for the sanctuary, you will, I trust, feel the importance of adapting your discourses to the circumstances and capacities of your people; and of entertaining them, not with the speculations and inventions of men, but the pure, unadulterated truths of the gospel. You will preach, not the doctrines of *Seneca*, nor of *Socrates*, nor of *Plato*, nor of any other moralist, ancient or modern, however celebrated for erudition and talents; but the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and him crucified. Mere moral harangues, however acceptable to unsanctified men, are by no means satisfactory food to the people of God. Nor have they a tendency to lead sinners to that knowledge of their own hearts and the glorious Redeemer, which are essential to salvation. This is attained only from a clear and full display of the doctrines of the gospel. If these be neglected, therefore, sinners will probably remain unawakened, and perish in their sins; and the people of God, not being suitably fed, will pine away

with hunger, and be justly offended. But, my brother, you have not so learned Christ. Nor will you, I confidently trust, so trifle with your Master's interest, and the souls of your people.

As the best preservative from dangerous errors, whether in faith or practice, and the surest way to attain the great ends of your ministry, permit me cordially to recommend to you, my brother, a close and persevering application to the study of the holy scriptures, accompanied with a close and humble walk with God. Read them daily, and with a praying heart. Realizing your dependence, you will keep near the throne of grace; will seek often, and seek fervently to the Father of lights, for the enlightening, sanctifying, and quickeng influences of the Holy Spirit. In this way you will labor, I trust, to get your *own* heart deeplv impressed with a sense of the everlasting importance of the religion you preach to others. Then only will you be likely to persuade your hearers with that sacred eloquence and zeal, which becomes the ambassador of God, and are suited to the value of immortal souls.

Finally, my brother, we wish you above all things a *faithful spirit.* May your ministry among this people be long and successful. And in that solemn day when you, and they, and all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, may you give up your account with joy and say, "*here am I, Lord, and the flock thou gavest me in charge;*" and receive this plaudit from your judge; "*well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*"

Beloved brethren and friends of this church and congregation;

The church of Christ is graven on the palms of his hands, and dear to him as the apple of his eye.

For her salvation he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Nor will he cease to care and provide for her instruction, edification, and comfort, till she be ripe for the world above, and conducted safe to glory. This day is witness, that he has not been unmindful, in your destitute state, of his church, and people in this place. This day he is sending you a pastor, we hope, *dear brethren*, after his own heart. He is sent, we trust, in answer to your prayers, and the prayers of Zion's friends, in your behalf. As the work of the ministry, to which he is now solemnly devoting himself, has been the object of his warmest desires and most active dilligence, from the commencement of his collegiate course, we confidently hope he will prove a rich blessing to you and your dear children. Brethren, behold the man ! and esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake, and be at *peace* among yourselves. This is a matter of very high concern both to you and him. The Spirit of God flies from the abodes of strife, and makes his residence where love and harmony prevail. " There the Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore."

The work of an ambassador of Christ, you will remember, is arduous ; and the difficulties and discouragements which attend a faithful discharge of its sacred duties, especially at this day of abounding error and laxity of morals, numerous and weighty. Your minister, therefore, will need all the encouragement and support, in your power to afford him. And permit me, my brethren, to assure you, that his usefulness among you, under God, will very much depend on the interest he has in your affections, and the treatment he receives at your hands. If you shew him that respect and kindness, which

the sacred nature and numerous difficulties of his office demand, and pay a suitable attention to the public administration of the word and ordinances of the gospel among you, his hands will be strengthened and heart encouraged. But if he find you cold and inattentive to these all important duties, his soul will be grieved, his hands unstrung, and his heart ready to melt within him, and sink under discouragement. "But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."

The object of his embassage is your reconciliation to God. For this end the gospel ministry was at first ordained. For this end the Lord Jesus came into our world, and died on the cross. As his ambassador, your minister comes to you in his name, and with messages from him. For your *souls* he is to watch, and as one who must give account. With what plainness, then; with what fidelity and zeal, must he state to you the terms of salvation, and urge your cordial and immediate compliance! And how ought you to hear with candor and self application, and receive in love the heavenly message, "which is able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus!"

And now, brethren, we commend both you, and this our brother, "to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." "*The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits; grace be with you. Amen.*"

This numerous and respected audience will indulge me a word in the close.

Men and Brethren,

How great is the mercy of God in his gifts to the children of men? Among the richest of these are

the gospel and ministry of reconciliation. They are the purchase of the Redeemer's blood, and interesting to us all, as eternity. The gospel unfolds to the view of perishing millions, at once, their misery, and their only remedy. It proclaims peace on earth, and offers to guilty, dying men, on terms of condescending grace, pardon and eternal life. To secure the end of this astonishing display of divine love, in the reconciliation of sinners to God, the Lord Jesus Christ is sending forth his ambassadors to state to you the terms, and urge your immediate compliance. If you hear and obey, we are authorised to say, your souls shall live. But if you refuse and still rebel, what, O sirs, awaits you, but the most awful and endless ruin! Hear, then, ye candidates for immortal glory, *life* and *death*, with all their undescribable consequences, are fairly set before you. Your choise of these, *in the name of God*, is now solemnly demanded. Nor is there room for the smallest delay. For the day of death and retribution is *awfully* near. *Choose ye, then, this day, whom ye will serve.* And, *if the Lord be God, follow him, cast the weapons of your rebellion at the foot of the Redeemer's cross*, and *be ye reconciled to God.*

THE

CHARGE,

BY THE REV. JOHN MARRETT, OF BURLINGTON.

THE office of the gospel ministry, committed to a person, is a betrustment of vast importance: it is highly honourable, but difficult and arduous faithfully to fulfil.

It requires due qualifications, dilligence, and serious concern in a minister, to discharge the duties thereof with honour to himself, profit to his people, and to the approbation of his Lord and Master.

A serious and thorough consideration of the weight and importance of the duties of this office, under a sense of human infirmities in the present state, may justly lead those of us who are in the ministry, to adopt the words of the apostle, and say, "who is sufficient for these things?" But that encouraging promise of our Lord, "Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world," will animate, support, and prosper us. For if we feel weak of ourselves, his strength is made perfect in weakness, and his grace is sufficient to enable us to perform what he requires of us.

Let us labor to discharge our duty, and Christ will not be wanting in assisting and carrying us through our work, till we have finished our course.

And, Rev. and dear Sir, as you have now entered into the labors of the Lord's vineyard, and taken part of this ministry with us; being by prayer and

imposition of hands of the Presbyters of the churches present, regularly separated to the pastoral office, over the church and congregation of the Lord in this place : therefore, in the name of Christ, we say unto you, take heed unto the ministry, which you have received of the Lord, to fulfil it in the several parts thereof.

As a watchman, take heed to thyself, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost now maketh you an overseer.

While you instruct others in the duties of religion, you will not forget your own interest, and honor, in being an example to your people, in the virtues of the Christian life, as well as an instructor of the doctrines and duties of the gospel : and thus hold faith, and a good conscience ; that both by your preaching, advice, and example, you may profit them.

Let religion have its proper weight on your mind, that you may feelingly recommend its important concerns to others.

Let your preparations for the pulpit, partake of the beaten oil of the sanctuary, and be adapted to the understanding, and to the profit of your hearers.

Make the Bible the man of your counsel, and the standard of your preaching : though you will pay a proper regard to the printed works of excellent men, yet call no man master.

Let Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and salvation only through him, be the basis and great subject of your preaching ; to lead men to see their native depravity, and exposedness to the curse of the law of God ; and that Christ is the great and only atonement for our sins ; and that by his righteousness alone, we can be justified.

Teach men the necessity of honoring Christ, and his grace, by a holy and righteous life; which will be an evidence of their being believers in him.

Preach the word, the pure word, and teach not for divine doctrines, the commandments of men.

Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, and keep back nothing that shall be profitable.

Study to approve yourself unto God, a workman that shall not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; and by manifestation of the truth, commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Warn the wicked of their evil ways; and encourage and strengthen the well disposed.

Feed the sheep, and feed the Lambs of the flock with food adapted to their respective capacities.

Exercise a tender concern for the instruction and bringing forward the rising generation; that religion and good morals may adorn their lives.

Administer the seals of the gospel covenant, baptism and the Lord's supper, to qualified subjects; distinguishing between those, who, in the judgment of charity appear fit, and those who appear unfit.

Administer the discipline of the church with impartiality, according to the word of God.

Do nothing by partiality, but have a sincere regard to truth and righteousness, in the discharge of your office duty; and thus prove yourself a wise, prudent, and upright servant in the house of your Lord and Master.

As you be now invested with power for ordaining others to the work of the gospel ministry, commit this trust to faithful men; men able to teach others. Satisfy yourself in the sight of God, as to the qualifications of such persons whom you may be called to

assist in ordaining : lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be a partaker of other men's sins.

As a minister of Jesus Christ, you must not only hold fast the faithful word, but be able by sound doctrine, and rational and scriptural arguments, both to exhort, and if possible, convince gainsayers.

Be valiant for the truth ; and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

But in contending for the faith, or truth of the gospel, beware, that you set not up your own human reason or opinion, above or instead of divine inspiration ; neither make your own sentiments, a standard for others; but exercise candor towards those who appear serious, dilligent, and honest inquirers after the truth, although their sentiments may not altogether coincide with your own.

Follow righteousness, faith, charity, and peace, with them who call on the Lord, out of a pure heart.

Be a lover of hospitality, and of all good men.

Give yourself to prayer, reading, and meditation.

You will always acknowledge your dependance on the grace of God to assist you, and that your sufficiency is not of yourself, but of the grace of Christ ; therefore you will be a man of prayer, carrying your own wants, and those of your people to the throne of grace.

In the course of your ministry, you may meet with things which will be afflictive and trying to your feelings, for you cannot expect always to find the passage of your life agreeable and pleasant; therefore keep near to Christ, and he will guide and keep you in prosperity, and support and comfort you in adversity.

May you shine as a bright light in this golden candlestick ; shine to your own honor, and to the benefit of all around you.

May you, and the people of your charge, be mutual blessings, and comforts to one another ; and strengthen each other's hands, and encourage each other's hearts in the ways of the Lord ; and by the divine favor attending you, may your ministry, be peaceful, and successful.

And be thou faithful unto the end, and when the chief Shephard shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

THE

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY ELISHA FISK.

Brother,

IN presenting you this hand, I present the hand of this council ; in receiving it, you receive their right hand of fellowship. This rite has been observed, on similar occasions, ever since the apostles, James, Cephas and John, gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, as they were going forth to the work of the ministry. It is not an unmeaning ceremony ; but a token of union and affection. It is expressive of the equality in rank and privilege, and of the oneness of the Christian ministry, in affection, work and design. It is, also, a pledge of mutual fidelity and assistance.

Receive this hand, then, as a token of our acknowledgment of your public inauguration and regular induction into the sacred office of the Christian ministry ; and of your equality in rank and privilege with ourselves. Receive it as a pledge of our affection, fellowship and co-operation.

Accept our cordial salutations. With pleasure, we greet you as a new laborer in the vineyard of our Lord, and congratulate you on entering upon the ministry among this church and people.

Trusting that you love the Redeemer, and will bring no other gospel but his, to your hearers, we bid you *God's speed.* We will be your active

friends ; we will be with you in times of trial and affliction, we will encourage and aid you, so long as your life and ministry shall be in conformity to the requirements of our common Master.

We hold your hand as a token of your acknowledging, that engagements are mutual between us.

You take part with us in the ministry, at a period, when the human mind, from the extreme of credulity, is verging to that of infidelity. We have to contend, not only with the hearts, the practices and the ignorance ; but with the head, the principles, and strengthened prejudices of men. The scoffers of the last days are come walking after their own lusts. It is a time of rebuke, and of blasphemy, and of reproach of the living God. Be not, however, discouraged. Let none of these things move you. Their cause is bad ; ours is good. They be more who are with us, than those who be with them. Only be intrepid, prudent and faithful, and grace will be sufficient for you. We may all take courage and be animated. The signs of the approach of the latter day glory are multiplying and growing more clear and unequivocal.

We hope, that you are not sent in this place, to a disobedient and gainsaying people, who will neither hear your messages, nor turn at your entreaty. Should it be that you are, and should Israel here not be gathered, your work will be with God. Fidelity will secure to you the promised crown.

May you find this a pleasant part of the vineyard. We wish that you may richly deserve, and long enjoy the esteem and affection of this church and people, whom it has been your singular felicity to unite. May you live in their hearts, and daily experience the benefit of their prayers and co-opera-

tion. We wish you a long, quiet, and peaceful ministry among them. May they realize in you all which they hope. Late, very late, and with abundant joy, may you return to your Master's presence. Long after you have retired from the earth, may your praise be in all the churches.

By your own consent, and the choice of the church, by prayer and imposition of hands, you are now set apart to the ministry. To you is committed the care of this church and people. You have received your solemn charge. Go forth, brother, to your work. Our good wishes, our prayers, our hearts, go with you.